



The Changing Context of Teacher Education in the Indian Scenario

Dr. (Mrs.), Parveen Rani

Principal, Baba Kundan Rural College of Education Ludhiana

KEYWORDS :

An educational institution performs a significant function of providing learning experiences to lead their students from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge. The key personnel in the institutions who play an important role to bring about this transformation are teachers. As stated by NCTE (1998) in Quality concerns in Secondary Teacher Education - The teacher is the most important element in any educational program. It is the teacher who is mainly responsible for implementation of the educational process at any stage. This shows that it is imperative to invest in the preparation of teachers, so that the future of a nation is secure. The importance of competent teachers to the nation's school system can in no way be overemphasized. The National Curriculum Framework 2005 places demands and expectations on the teacher, which need to be addressed by both initial and continuing teacher education.

MEANING OF THE TEACHER EDUCATION

It is well known that the quality and extent of learner achievement are determined primarily by teacher competence, sensitivity and teacher motivation. The National Council for Teacher Education has defined teacher education as - A programme of education, research and training of persons to teach from pre-primary to higher education level.

Teacher education is a programme that is related to the development of teacher proficiency and competence that would enable and empower the teacher to meet the requirements of the profession and face the challenges therein. According to Goods Dictionary of Education Teacher education means - all the formal and non-formal activities and experiences that help to qualify a person to assume responsibilities of a member of the educational profession or to discharge his responsibilities more effectively.

Teacher education encompasses teaching skills, sound pedagogical theory and professional skills. Teacher Education - Teaching Skills + Pedagogical theory + Professional Skills.

Teaching Skills would include providing training and practice in the different techniques, approaches and strategies that would help the teachers to plan and impart instruction, provide appropriate reinforcement and conduct effective assessment. It includes effective classroom management skills, preparation and use of instructional materials and communication skills.

Pedagogical theory includes the philosophical, sociological and psychological considerations that would enable the teachers to have a sound basis for plasticizing the teaching skills in the classroom. The theory is stage specific and is based on the needs and requirements that are characteristic of that stage.

Professional skills include the techniques, strategies and approaches that would help teachers to grow in the profession and also work towards the growth of the profession. It includes soft skills, counseling skills, interpersonal skills, computer skills, information retrieving and management skills and above all lifelong learning skills.

An amalgamation of teaching skills, pedagogical theory and professional skills would serve to create the right knowledge, attitude and skills in teachers, thus promoting holistic development.

NATURE OF TEACHER EDUCATION:

- Teacher education is a continuous process and its pre-service and in-service components are complimentary to each other.
- Teacher education is broad and comprehensive. Besides pre-service and in-service programmes for teachers, it is meant to be involved in various community programmes and extension activities, via adult education and non-formal education programmes, literacy and development activities of the society.
- It is ever-evolving and dynamic. In order to prepare teachers who are competent to face the challenges of the dynamic society, Teacher education has to keep abreast of recent developments and trends.
- The crux of the entire process of teacher education lies in its curriculum, design, structure, organization and transaction modes, as well as the extent of its appropriateness.
- As in other professional education programmes the teacher education curriculum has a knowledge base which is sensitive to the needs of field applications and comprises meaningful, conceptual blending of theoretical understanding available in several cognate disciplines. However the knowledge base in teacher education does not comprise only an admixture of concepts and principles from other disciplines, but a distinct gestalt emerging from the conceptual blending, making it sufficiently specified.
- Teacher education has become differentiated into stage-specific programmes. This suggests that the knowledge base is adequately specialized and diversified across stages, which should be utilized for developing effective processes of preparing entrant teachers for the functions which a teacher is expected to perform at each stage.
- It is a system that involves in interdependence of its inputs, processes and outputs.

CHANGING CONTEXT OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE INDIAN SCENARIO:

The well-established traditional of teaching and learning in India has retained its inherent strength even under adverse circumstances. The post-independence period was characterized by major efforts being made to nature and transform teacher education. The system of teacher preparation has come under considerable pressure as a result of the expansion and growth of school education, through efforts to universalize elementary education. Having inherited a foreign model of teacher preparation at the time of independence from Britain in 1946, major efforts have been made to adapt and up-date the teacher education curriculum to local needs, to make it more context based, responsive and dynamic with regard to best meeting the particular needs of India. The current system of teacher education is supported by a network of national, provincial 12 and district level resource institutions working together to enhance the quality and effectiveness of teacher preparation programs at the pre-service level and also through in-service programs for serving teachers throughout the country. Impact of National policies: India has made considerable progress in school education since independence with reference to overall literacy, infrastructure and universal access and enrolment in schools. Two major developments in the recent years from the background to the present reform in teacher education the political recognition of Universalization of Elementary Education that led to the Right to Education Bill, 2008 and The National Curriculum Framework for school education, 2005. The Bill has been passed by the Parliament and the Right to Education Act has come into being

making it mandatory for the state to provide free and compulsory education to almost 20 crore children in the 6-14 age group till class 8. The Act mandates a schedule for the functioning of schools which includes a teacher student ratio of 1:30 till a student population of 200 students at the primary stage. This would increase the demand for qualified elementary school teachers many times. The country has to address the need of supplying well qualified and professionally trained teachers in large numbers in the coming years. The launch of the massive Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in 2002 and the recent financial commitment and education cases to augment the Universal Elementary Education mission have underscored the need to adequately prepare teachers to address the growing demand for quality education. Developments in School education : School education has seen significant development over the decades since independence. According to Government estimates (Selected Educational Statistics-2004-2005-Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi) while 82% of the 20 crore children of the 5-14 age group were in school as per enrolment figures, it is equally true that 50% of these children are dropping out before completing class 8 (MHRD Annual Report 2007-08). The situation on the ground is still riddled with difficulties. Regional, social economic and gender disparities are posing new challenges. This reality increases the challenge that the prospective teacher will face in implementing the Right to Education Act. 13 The continued fragmentation of the school system poses the severest challenge to the national declaration of catering to the basic needs of all children in the 6-14 age groups through the elementary education in an inclusive setting. However increasing privatization and differentiation of the schooling system have vitiated drastically the right to quality education for all children. Changing Role of the Teacher : The current system of schooling poses tremendous burden on children. Educationists are of the view that the burden arises from treating knowledge as a given 'and external reality existing outside the learner and embedded in textbooks. Knowledge is essentially a human construct, a continuously evolving process of reflective learning. The NCF 2005, requires a teacher to be facilitator of children's learning in a manner that the child is helped to construct his/her knowledge. Education is not a mechanical activity of information transmission and teachers are not information dispensers. Teachers have to increasingly play the role of crucial mediating agents through whom curriculum is transacted. Challenges in Teacher Education: Unprecedented expansion of teacher education institutions and programmes during the past few years characterizes the teacher education scenario of today. With increasing school enrolments and the launch of pan-Indian primary education development programmes like Operation Blackboard, District Primary Education Programme, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Universalization of Elementary Education, there was a natural increase in the demand for teachers. Added to this, the backlog of untrained teachers in the system and the essential requirement of pre-service teacher certification for appointment as a teacher led to mounting pressure on existing institutional capacity. The demand for exceeding supply, market forces have taken over unprecedented rise in the number of teacher education institutions in most parts of the country. From 3489 courses in 3199 institutions and an intake of 2,74,072 in 2004, the numbers in December, 2008 swelled to 14,523 courses in 12,200 institutions with an intake of 10,73,661 at different levels. This expansion has taken a heavy toll on quality parameters like infrastructure, faculty learning resources and student profile. Teacher education as a whole needs urgent and comprehensive reform. There is a need to bring greater convergence between professional preparation and continuing professional development of teachers at all stages of schooling in terms of level, duration of structure.

CONCLUSION

No nation develops beyond the quality of its education system, which is highly dependent on the quality of its teachers. Teachers should be given the most appropriate tools during and after their training, including content knowledge and skills as well as teaching methodology to be able to do their work professionally. The globalization concept, if taken into account, would require that teachers and teaching should be recognized like all other professions and should require stringent training and acquisition of knowledge and skills and professional registration under a global council of unified teacher registration body to allow for easy mobility of teachers across national boundaries.

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